

PROFESSOR NARESH CHANDRA DATTA (1934-2018)



Naresh Chandra Datta, retired Professor and Head, Department of Zoology, University of Calcutta (CU) left for heavenly abode on the 19th March 2018 at 84 years of age. He was a Vice-President of Indian Science News Association (ISNA), Kolkata until his death. Earlier he had been an Honorary Secretary of ISNA and a member of the Editorial Board of Science and Culture, the bimonthly journal published by ISNA. Fondly revered as ‘Professor of Professors’, Professor N. C. Datta’s contributions have undoubtedly left a footprint in education, research and development in zoology, ichthyology and fisheries science in eastern India.

Professor Datta was born in his ancestral home in Dhaka on the 1st January, 1934. He graduated with B.Sc. (Zoology) from Bangabasi College, Kolkata in 1953, obtained M.Sc. degree in Zoology (1955) and Ph.D. degree in Zoology (1972) from the University of Calcutta. After a brief lectureship in Zoology at Gurudas College, Kolkata, Professor Datta joined the Department of Zoology, C.U. in 1971 and superannuated in 1991. He founded the Fishery and Ecology Research Unit in the Department of Zoology, C.U. where research was focused on fish taxonomy, biology of bony fishes, fish pathology, aquatic ecology, aquatic toxicology and aquaculture. Fifty-five students obtained their Ph.D. degrees under his guidance. Later he developed interest in History and Philosophy of Science. He authored (with T. Sen) a Book entitled ‘Aspects of History of Science’, The Asiatic Society (2006). In fact, the last

research scholar of Professor Datta did her Ph.D. (2015) on History of Science.

Professor Datta organized the first Prof. H. K. Mukherjee Memorial Lecture in the Department of Zoology in 1977, which is continuing since then. He also instituted D. N. Ganguly Academy of Biosphere, which was handed over to The Zoological Society, Kolkata to arrange for D. N. Ganguly Memorial and H. K. Mukherjee Memorial Lectures on every alternate year. He was elected the President, Section of Zoology, Entomology and Fisheries in the 77th Session of Indian Science Congress (ISC) held at Kochi in 1990. He was also invited to deliver the Platinum Jubilee Lecture in the 80th Session of the ISC held at Goa in 1993. He used to connote his office room at C.U. as a ‘Meditation Room’.

Professor Datta had been elected a Fellow of The Zoological Society of India (ZSI), Bodh Gaya; National Environmental Science Academy (NESA), New Delhi; National Institute of Ecology, Jaipur; Marine Biological Association of India, Kochi; Society of Nature Conservators, Muzaffarnagar; Inland Fisheries Society of India (IFSI), Barrackpore and West Bengal Academy of Science and Technology, Kolkata. He received a number of awards including Meghnad Saha Popular Science Prize of ISNA (1962-1963), S.P. Basu Memorial Medal of The Zoological Society (1965), Eminent Zoologist Gold Medal, Golden Jubilee Medal and Sir Dorabji Tata Memorial

Medal of ZSI, Prof. J.S. Datta Munshi Gold Medal of the International Society for Ecological Communication and E.P. Odum Gold Medal of Binova Bhava University, 'Meen Mitra' Award of the Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal (2013) and Acharya Satyendra Nath Bose Smriti Puraskar from Bangiya Bijnan Parishad (2017). The latter was the last honour he received in his lifetime.

Professor Datta had been a Member of the Selection Committees of College Service Commission and Public Service Commission, West Bengal, Programme Advisory Committee of Zoological Survey of India and of Institute of Wetland Management and Ecological Design, Kolkata. He attended the 13th Pacific Science Congress at Vancouver, Canada in 1975 and the 4th European Congress of Ichthyology at Hamburg in 1982. He visited some fishery research laboratories in USA, Canada, Germany and Bangladesh.

Professor Datta took active interest in diverse arena of fisheries, ichthyology and aquatic ecology. He was associated with many organizations including ISNA, The Zoological Society, IFSI, Bangiya Bijnan Parishad, Asian Marine Conservation Association, NESAs and C.U. Teachers' Association in various capacities. In recent past, a new species of Erethistid catfish was recorded from

Katakhal and Barak rivers in southern Assam, and it was named *Hara nareshi* in 2015 in recognition of Professor Datta's contribution.

He authored the Book "Environmental Awareness is Mandatory for the Survival of Mankind – An Enquiry and Essays", published from Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandira, Belur Math in Aug., 2007. In the Book entitled "Introduction to History of Science in India", published jointly by Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture and National Academy of Sciences (India) in Jan., 2013, Professor Datta contributed an invited chapter on 'Sunder Lal Hora'.

Professor Datta suffered from low hemoglobin count in 2014, had minor urinary/prostate gland problems, was hospitalised at AMRI, Kolkata in June, 2017 for a brief period. His wife Sabita Datta died in June, 2004. He is survived by three daughters and three sons-in-law. The cherished memory of this distinguished scientific personality, a proficient organizer and an outstanding teacher will always remain in the hearts of all who knew him. □

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